

APRIL 2011 to JULY 2011

(Volume 34)





APRIL 2011 (Volume 34)





aced with a blank sheet I can see how difficult it must be to write a novel. All those ideas

that I had earmarked for my masterpiece suddenly vanished into the ether. Well I've made a start so the blank page is blank no more...

Things are speeding up on the domestic front. Tammy and Ben are keen to move now and their house is on the market so viewings and keeping the house spotless are the order of the day. People seem to turn up earlier than arranged, later than arranged or not at all. The kids are amazed at their rudeness making personal remarks in many cases but I am sure it will be worth it in the long term.

DP has bought a great boat but more about that along the way... We are delighted...so many things are on the 'move'.

Mum is still great and her infectious laugh and sense of humour shows no signs of diminishing. She will be 91 next week. She is fun and delights in coming round for a meal with us every week. We have been lucky and many meals are enjoyed in the garden which is a constant delight and Lynny really enjoys it alongside me. We have surrounded the water feature with terraced layered plants in pots and they have grown and matured to give a delightful aspect when we are having our garden breakfasts. Some times as we sit enjoying our coffee and toast the church bells and birds complete the enjoyment. Simple pleasures but very enjoyable. We feel that if one can enjoy daily life everything else is a bonus.

Larnie is doing so well at school, excelling in many subjects and even going into 'gifted classes' in some subjects. She is developing into a young lady now and things are moving so fast. We invariably see less of her now as she has a very busy social calendar and Grandparents are well down the list (just as it should be).

DP is busy with festivals and is travelling between Somerset, Kings Lynn and on to Glastonbury and is looking forward to getting back to his new boat. He is seeing less of the kids as circumstances (and Angela) seem to dictate - but when we see them they are great and growing up beautifully..



Jack is enjoying his course and also growing up into a very nice young man. John is a 'Ben-Clone' and has helped me greatly recently in helping with new PC purchase and installation. He has also bought a 'boy-dream' of a car...that he has earned by hard work.

Lynny is still working at the JC but hopes it will not be for much longer. I hope in the near future we can make some life-changes. It is hard work still and both of us want to take things a bit easier. Not a total retirement but certainly it would be nice to slow down a bit. We definitely both still work harder than all our friends and have taken the unusual step of pre-booking holidays. We are off to Sweden in August for a week with two night at three different locations : two on the West coast which is supposed to be very pretty, and two in Gothenburg which should be great and with a car hire arranged.

In September we are going for four nights to Lynton in North Devon to what looks like a beautiful guest house with Martin & Maxine. We are laughing already and really looking forward to four silly nights relaxing and walking with great friends.....Finally the 'biggie'. We have indulged ourselves while we still have the energy. We have booked a 3 week trip to Ecuador and Peru in February next year. This takes in some very varied landscapes and we stay for 7 nights in hotels, 9 nights in a lodge, 3 nights in a hostel, and two nights in an overnight bus travelling on local buses, river boats and on foot. We travel into The Amazon jungle, hike through rainforests and swim and have tubing excursions with beaches, cities, glaciers, markets and cathedrals. We are so looking forward to it...hang the expense...we are a long-time dead!!!

Back to reality....The Middle East seems all set for major problems with so much unrest in every quarter. I reluctantly feel the world will be involved sooner rather than later. The influx of immigrants here coupled with many long-term unemployed and the economic downturn are a recipe for disaster. No country can produce virtually nothing, have massive social payments, expensive foreign aid programmes coupled with nil growth while other countries pull themselves out of recession. India, China and some African countries seem to be on the road for world financial dominance whilst good old UK seems to have totally unrealistic delusions of grandeur. Seems so obvious to us so why can't politicians see it and change the way they think. I am so sceptical of the political scene and can see right through political rhetoric with an un-blinkered clarity of vision. Maybe age brings that.

Enough of my moans. Life is great on a personal level. We work hard, laugh a lotenjoy day-to-day small things and best of all we have our great family around us. What more can we want..... Money, retirement, holidays, sunshine, walks.... No seriously. We want nothing that is not achievable and hopefully in the near future....

Ralph

Written in June 2011



Just after a real downpour this local fox thought he'd take forty winks under our hammock and dry off





Rochester Cathedral is England's second oldest, founded in 604AD by Bishop Justus. The present building dates back to the work of the French monk, Gundulf, in 1080. Glorious Norman architecture of the nave, parts of the crypt, as well as one of the finest Romanesque facades in England,





Rochester Castle

Grain was built on a 250-acre (1.0 km²) site for the nationalised [Central Electricity Generating Board](#). It was built by the [Cleveland Bridge Company](#) beginning in 1975. It opened in 1979. It is located on the [Isle of Grain](#), where the [River Medway](#) flows into the [Thames Estuary](#). The station has the second tallest chimney in the UK, at 244 metres (801 ft), visible from a wide area of North Kent and parts of South [Essex](#). The station burns oil to drive, via steam turbines, two 690MW (gross power output - but 30 MW is used on-site, leaving 660 MW for export to the Grid) alternators. The station is capable of generating enough electricity to supply approximately 2% of Britain's peak electricity needs. The station was originally designed to have a total capacity of 3,300MW but currently has an operational capacity of 1,320MW. The two remaining oil-fired generating units were mothballed by [Powergen](#) in 2002 and 2003, but almost immediately the company began to consider reopening the plant as electricity prices increased rapidly. It is operated by E.ON UK. The plant does not meet the emissions requirements of the Large combustion plant directive and must therefore close in 2015.



I love the juxtaposition of the brilliant red of the poppies and the bleak greyness of the power station

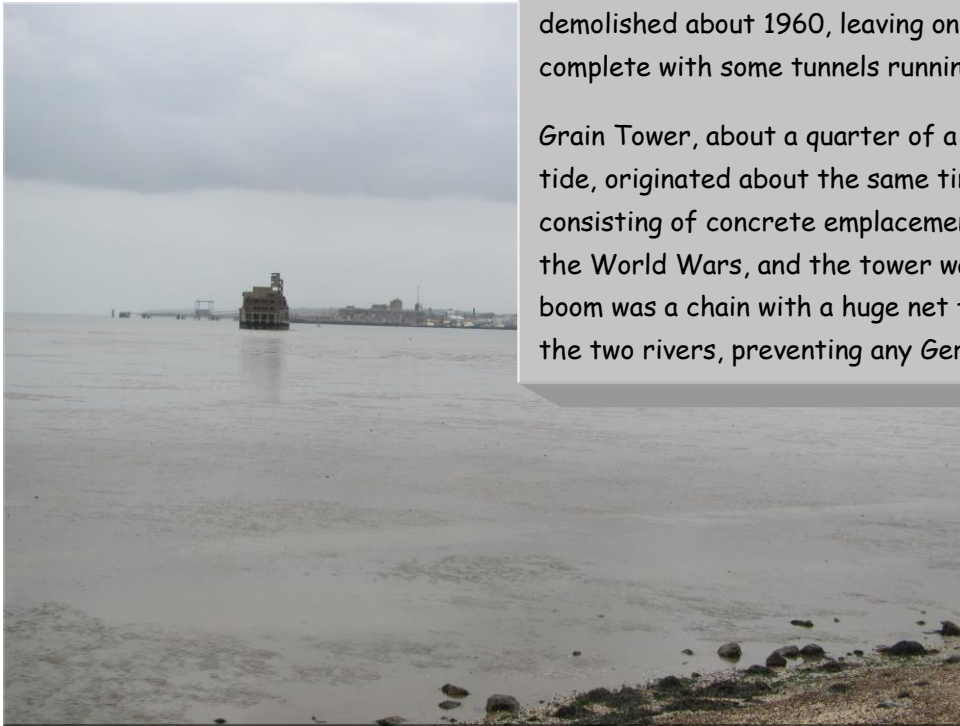


GRAIN - THE END OF THE ROAD

Grain is probably the most remote location in Kent. The village tucked away at the back end of beyond.

Perched on the Medway, Grain is the final stop at the end of a long peninsula. It's not a place you get many visitors. When the Isle of Grain was an actual island, there used to be a neat short cut for vessels travelling between the Thames and the Medway. Now there is only one road in and out - and that sweeps through a huge brownfield site which used to be the location of a massive oil refinery.

Every morning a fleet of coaches arrives to take the population - at least those of working age - away to jobs in London or the Medway towns. With a night time population of around 1,400 there are smaller communities. But few as tight knit. The village has only one pub and one guest house - Grayne Lodge. If you want other entertainment it's a 28 mile round trip to the cinema and nightclubs at Stroud. But if you believe what the villagers say, there's nowhere else people would rather live.



The Isle of Grain was the site of Grain Fort, built in the 1860s and used for coastal defence until the 1950s. The fort was almost completely demolished about 1960, leaving only the original earth rampart, complete with some tunnels running underground.

Grain Tower, about a quarter of a mile off-shore and accessible at low tide, originated about the same time as the main fort. Later additions, consisting of concrete emplacements and shelters, were added during the World Wars, and the tower was used as a boom control point. The boom was a chain with a huge net fitted to it. This went straight across the two rivers, preventing any German U-boats getting through.

We love finding the unusual and The Isle of Grain was very bleak with houses in the shadow of not one, but two, massive eerie power stations. Even the sea walk was bleak with this fort out to sea.

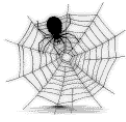




Maybe with not much to do on the Isle of Grain a short spelling course may help to fill the hours

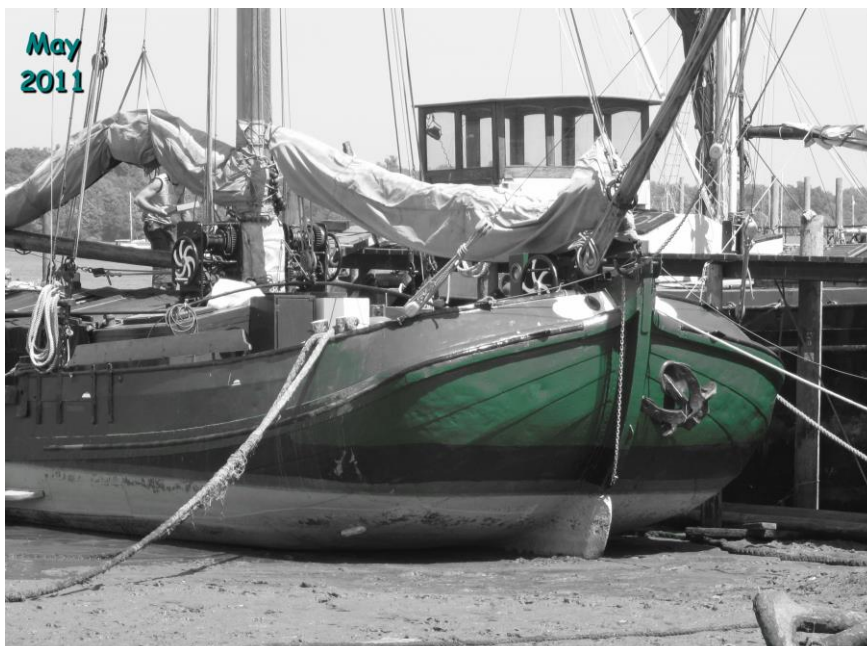






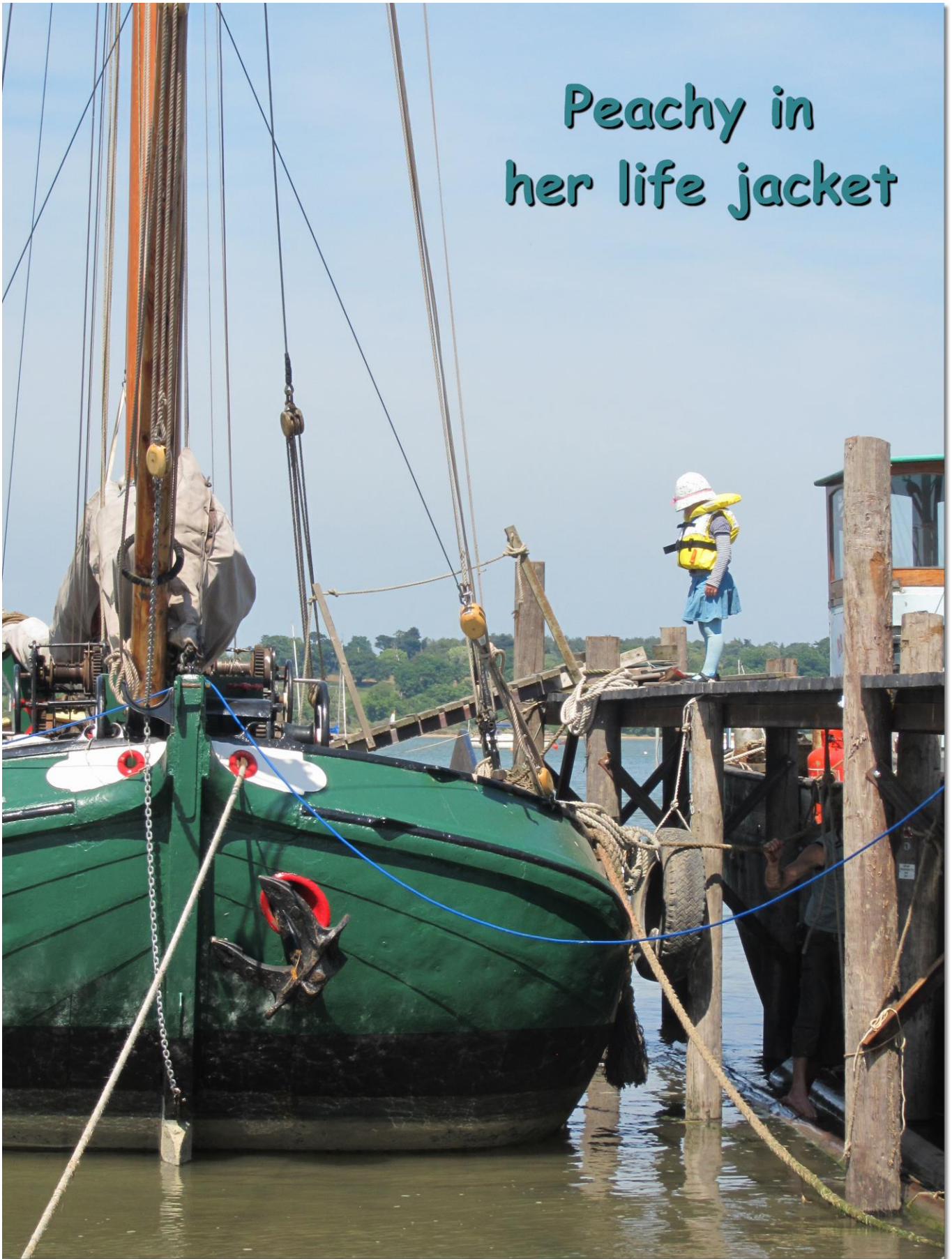


In May 2011 DP got his great new boat and we went down with Nana to visit him. Nana even managed to climb the steep gangplank and got on board...not bad for 91 !!





Peachy in her life jacket





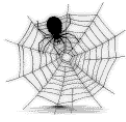




Canoe launched



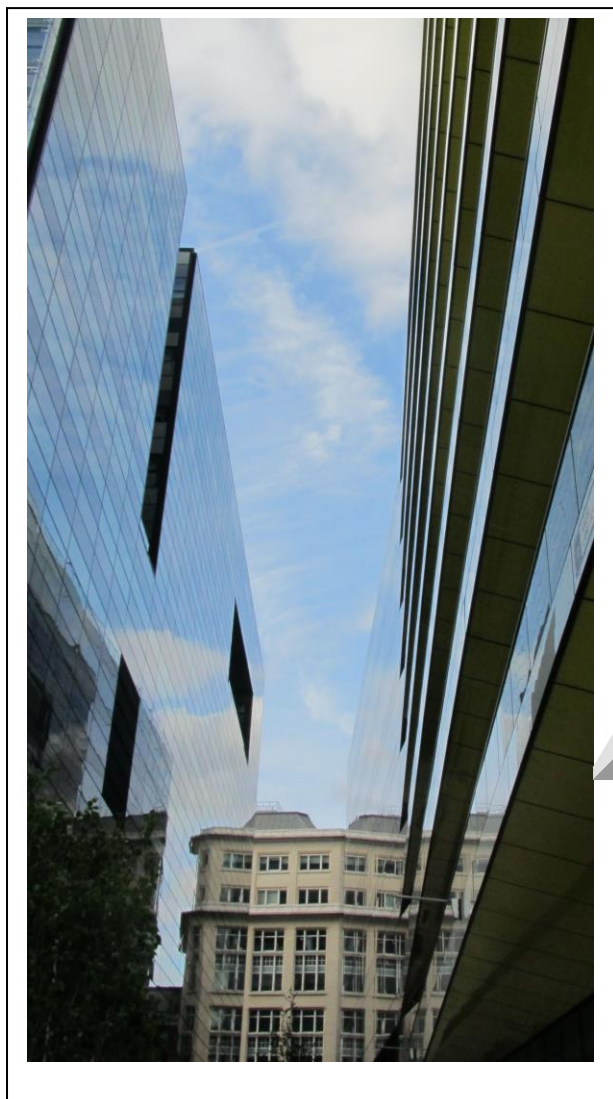
May
2011



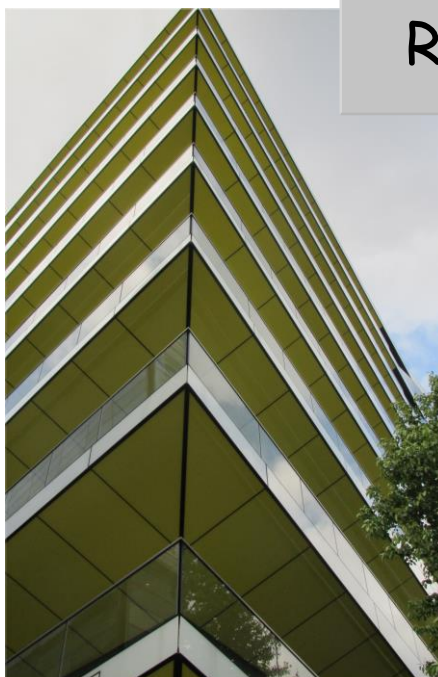


Walking along the north bank of the Thames I took these 'different' shots





Angles



Reflections



The old lamp against the latest addition to the skyline



Info from Wikipedia...Hay's Galleria is named after its original owner, the merchant Alexander Hay, who acquired the property - then a brewhouse - in 1651. In around 1840 John Humphrey Jnr acquired a lease on the property. He asked [William Cubitt](#) (who was father-in-law to two of Humphrey's sons) to convert it into a 'wharf', in fact an enclosed dock, in 1856 and it was renamed Hay's Wharf

During the nineteenth century, the wharf was one of the chief delivery points for ships bringing [tea](#) to the [Pool of London](#). At its height, 80% of the dry produce imported to London passed through the wharf, and on this account the Wharf was nicknamed 'the [Larder](#) of [London](#)'. The Wharf was largely rebuilt following the [Great Fire of Southwark](#) in June 1861 and then continued in use for nearly a century until it was badly bombed in September 1940 during the [Second World War](#). Trade declined drastically after the Second World War and the surrounding area became increasingly economically depressed.

In 1987, with the increasing urban regeneration of the Thames Corridor and nearby [London Docklands](#), the area was acquired by the [St Martin's Property Corporation](#) the real estate arm of the State of Kuwait, as part of their '[London Bridge City](#)' development, stretching from London Bridge easterly to English Grounds where it is terminated by the Southwark Crown Court site and bound to the South by [Tooley Street](#). The decision to retain the wharf, a [Grade II listed structure](#), to sympathetically restore its tea and produce warehouses surrounding it, to provide office accommodation and shops, was done by permanently closing the dock gates, covering the 'impounded' area of the dock with a floor to the sill of the wharf-sides and, most spectacularly, enclosing the entire space with a roof, reminiscent of the Victorian railway termini of the same period, to create the galleria. This was implemented by [Twigg Brown Architects](#) as part of their masterplan for the renewal strategy. In a fountain at the centre of the Galleria is an acclaimed 60ft moving bronze sculpture of a ship, called 'The Navigators' by sculptor David Kemp, unveiled in 1987 to commemorate the Galleria's shipping heritage



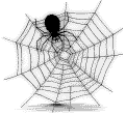
A further stage in the Shard development



It doesn't look much but it is a favourite starting point for our Lee Navigation walk. A 'full English' and then a long fascinating walk alongside the Lee - passing wetlands, housing developments, an old sewage works transformed into a field study centre, riverside pubs, Lesney Toy Factory changing into luxury flats and passing Hackney Marshes and the many football pitches and onto the Olympic site (the path temporarily closed for improvements). It is like a rear view of London and we always see a new aspect. It is always busy now with walkers and cyclists.



A youth group clearing unwanted growth from the filter beds

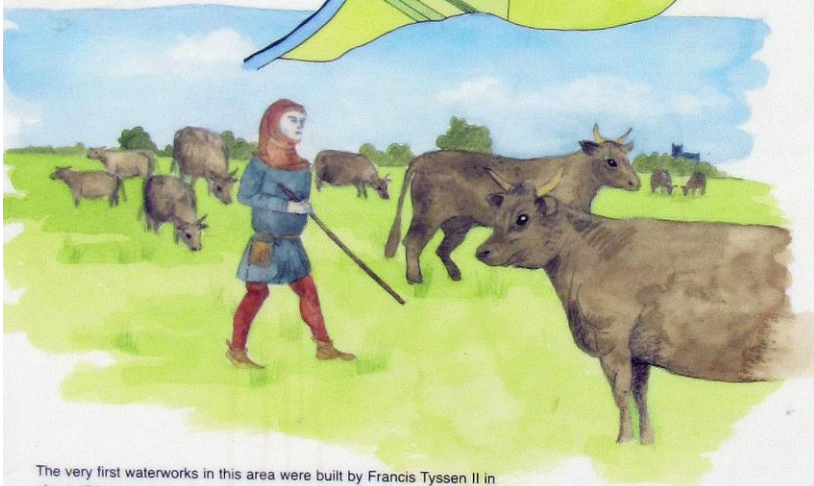
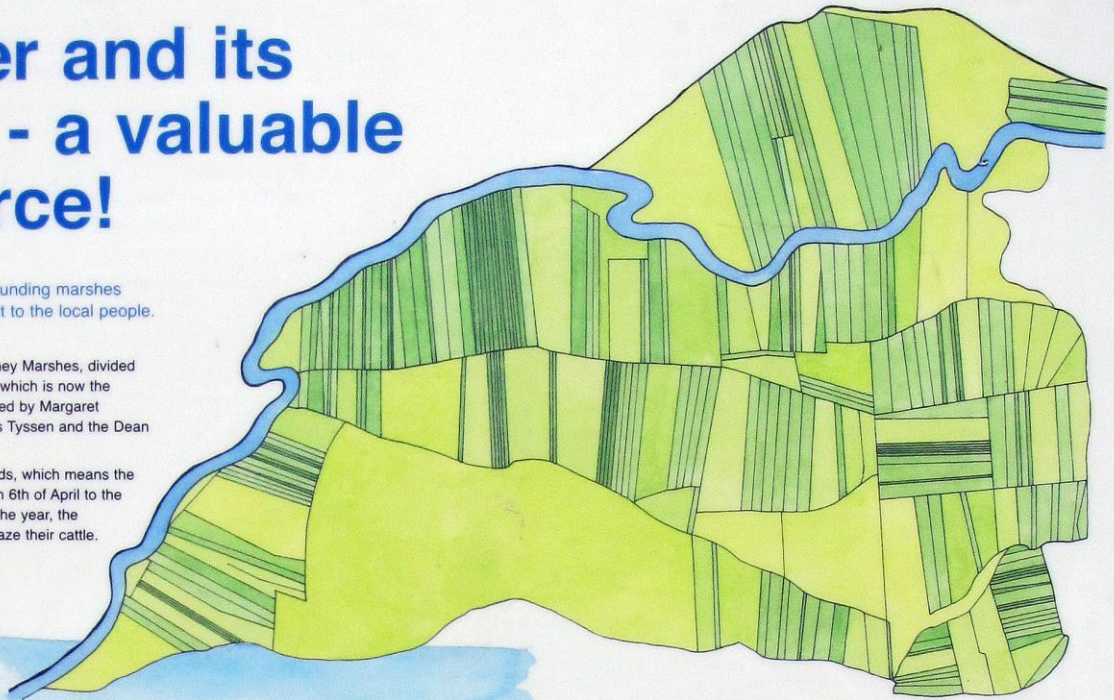


A River and its Water - a valuable resource!

The River Lea and its surrounding marshes have always been important to the local people.

This map of 1745 shows Hackney Marshes, divided into ownership strips. The land which is now the Middlesex Filter Beds was owned by Margaret Prosser, John Harcourt, Francis Tyssen and the Dean of St. Pauls.

The Marshes were lammas lands, which means the owner could cultivate them from 6th of April to the 12th of August. For the rest of the year, the commoners were allowed to graze their cattle.



The very first waterworks in this area were built by Francis Tyssen II in about 1707 just north of Lea Bridge at 'Jeremy's Ferry'. A waterwheel brought the water out of the River and pumped it along wooden pipes to a reservoir at Clapton. From there, the water was distributed to the people. This method was very basic and eventually fell into disrepair. Local people had to go back to carrying water from the River or collecting it from pumps and rain butts. In 1760, the Hackney Water Works Company moved down the River to this site and set up new waterworks to supply local people.

By 1882, there were 25 filter beds in the Essex and Middlesex Water Works. These were later replaced by the Coppermill Water Treatment Works.



In 1829 the site was bought by the East London Waterworks Company. All the water at this time was untreated and because of this disease quickly spread.

Cholera

In 1849, 14,000 people in East London died from Cholera. People demanded cleaner, safer water and so in 1852 the East London Waterworks Company began constructing the six Middlesex Filter Beds to purify the water.

For further information

Lee Valley Park Information Service

Lee Valley Park Farm
Crooked Mile
Waltham Abbey
EN9 2EG

E-mail info@leevalleypark.org.uk

Telephone 01992 702200 or

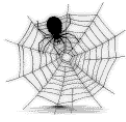
The Waterworks on 0208 988 7566

www.leevalleypark.org.uk

Illustrations by www.avery-illustrations.co.uk
Designed by Sue Tinker 01882 802644



Even the rubbish-filled River
Lee has its beauty



Even the graffiti can add a certain statement to the surroundings





A **COLOURFUL**
conversation over a pint





...about as close to the Olympic site as we could get riverside.



tried to get tickets but it was a fiasco and totally undemocratic with so many going to 'so-called' VIP's and corporate clients. The website was swamped but did not crash. It just had insufficient tickets for sale to the general public and when the remainder were on sale I tried and ten minutes after opening at 7.00am there was NOTHING available. Some people who had the noise and inconvenience of the site preparation at the water events at Waltham Cross backed onto the site there and were deafened by the public address system trials were unable to get tickets to any events...and their gardens backed onto the site...How fair is that...

Dating back to 17th Century, The Belvedere was once the Summer Ballroom to the Jacobean mansion that was Holland House. It stands, not only in the middle of one of London's most beautiful parks,



Holland Park, but in one of the capital's most fashionable areas. In June 2011 we celebrated Mum's 91st birthday here but rotten weather curtailed our walk around the grounds after a great meal.



Ben, Tammy and Lynn went with Larnie to St.John's Wood Synagogue where Larnie and some friends were congratulated for voluntary works for less fortunate people

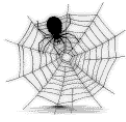




I was going to write.. "a walk with the lads" but I guess I am kidding myself and should be honest and entitle it " a geriatric day out". We walked along the Lee navigation from Tottenham Hale to Stratford (The Olympic site again) and back. An interesting, but scenically challenged walk.



No.....the water was really this colour



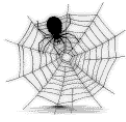
The Public Baths at Hackney Wick (now disused) give a good idea of what was so good about the public utilities of previous generations.





Under construction....

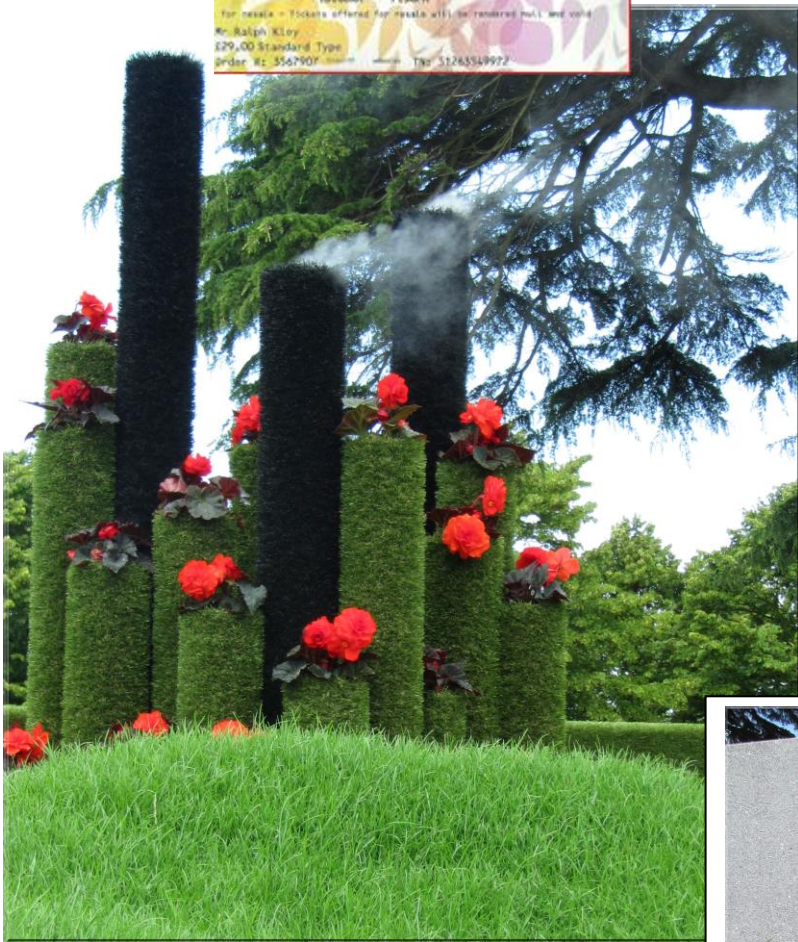


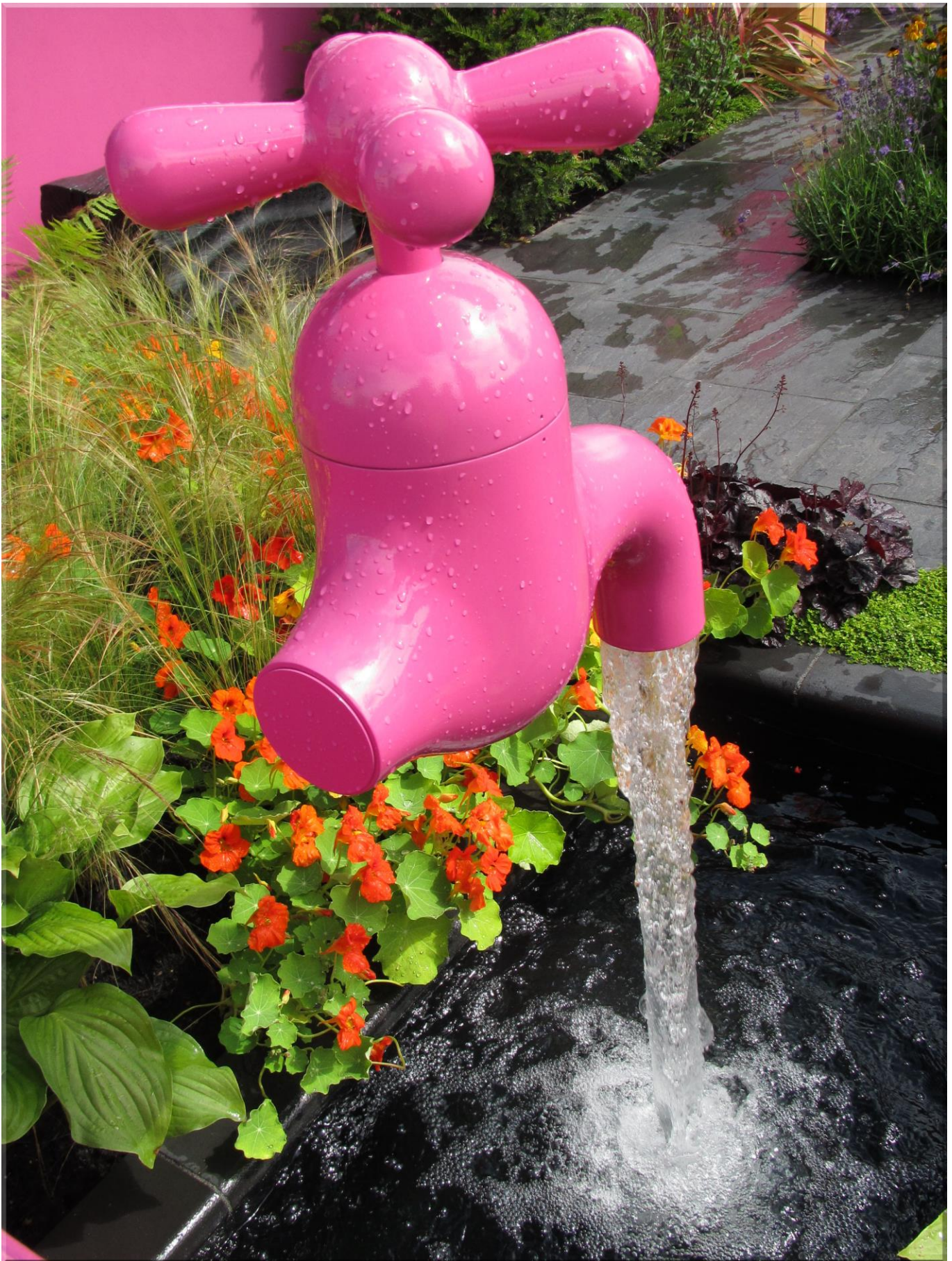
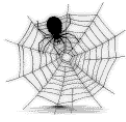


This towering, twisted mass of metal will be Britain's lasting monument to the nation's role in hosting the 2012 games. Turner Prize-winning artist Anish Kapoor designed the £19 million sculpture, a ruby red, helter skelter-style structure that, at 377ft, will stand more than twice as tall as Nelson's column.

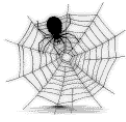


This was a first for us and despite a totally wet day we thoroughly enjoyed the display gardens and a fresh look at gardening. There is a lot of talent out there and we were quite inspired. (Lynn totally amazes me now with a new love of gardening which has laid dormant for so long...)











Some of the displays were so stunning that we were constantly impressed by the way in which the various gardens seemed to be at the very peak of each plant's and flower's ultimate display. In reality it must require incredible patience to get







It seems that you
could learn to grow
anything here...

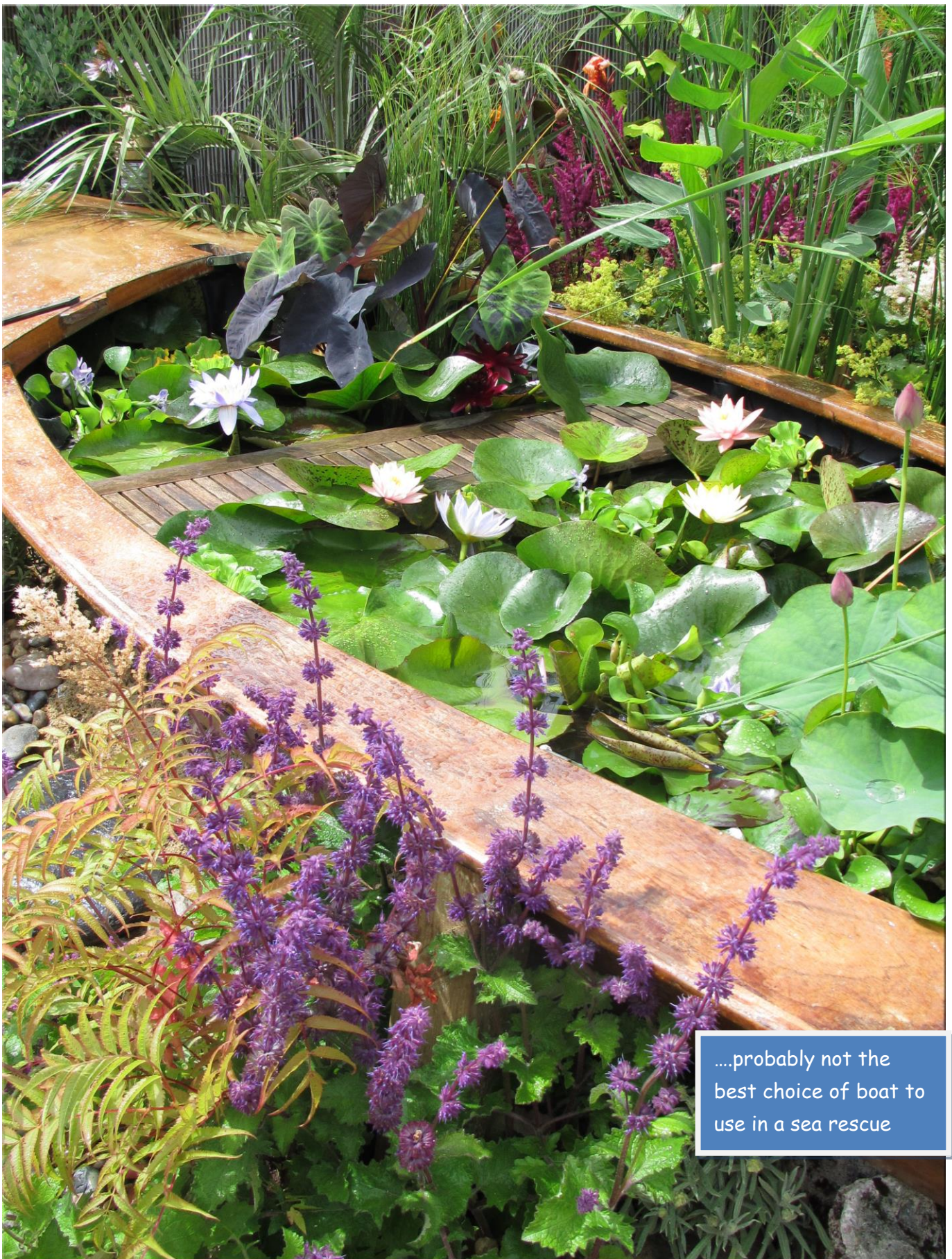
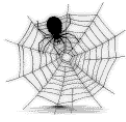
Even a marquee !!



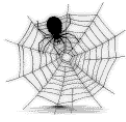
This small garden used every inch productively to produce great crops of vegetables in a really attractive way



This garden encapsulated the war 'Dig for Victory' campaign and attracted a lot of attention. The cleverly placed gas mask, army uniform, old-fashioned watering cans etc added to the atmosphere.

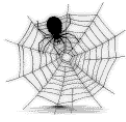


....probably not the best choice of boat to use in a sea rescue



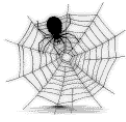
The theme was the
Beatles Yellow
Submarine





Even the ice cream cart had a floral makeover





But we decided not to wait for refreshments as the queue seemed too long. Some people appeared to have been waiting for ages.